

Aspirin may benefit cancer treatments

December 4 2023



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Aspirin is an inexpensive and readily available medication that could benefit cancer treatments, preventing metastatic cancer spread and reducing vascular complications, finds a new meta-analysis study.

The Welsh Aspirin Group in Cardiff University has published a

[systematic review](#) and meta-analysis examining the impacts of the use of aspirin as a treatment for cancer. The research, "Aspirin and [cancer treatment](#): systematic reviews and meta-analyses of evidence: for and against," was [published](#) in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

The research looked at the results of 118 [observational studies](#) based on around 1 million patients with a wide range of cancers, finding that taking a daily low-dose (75 or 81 mg/day) aspirin was associated with a 20% reduction in deaths from cancer and in deaths from all causes.

"Aspirin was first shown in 1968 to be of benefit in the treatment of cancer, as it targets a number of key biological mechanisms of cancer, reducing risks of metastatic cancer spread and vascular complications in [cancer patients](#). Our review of research surrounding aspirin in cancer treatment finds positive evidence to support its use in cancer treatments. The use of low-dose aspirin in cancer treatment has been shown to lead to likely reduction in metastatic cancer spread and reduce complications related to [blood clots](#)," said Peter Elwood, Honorary Professor at Cardiff University.

Aspirin is known to increase the risk of gastrointestinal bleeding. The research aimed to evaluate the risks of the use of aspirin in cancer treatments, including the risks associated with gastrointestinal bleeding. The report from the Welsh Aspirin Group examined studies of stomach bleeding associated with aspirin, and shows that such bleeding attributable to aspirin is less serious than gastrointestinal bleeding in patients with [stomach ulcers](#) or stomach infection, and there is no valid evidence of any fatal bleeding attributable to aspirin.

The researchers concluded that, given the relative safety of aspirin, it should be promoted as a treatment for cancer due to the consistent evidence of reduction in metastatic cancer spread and the earlier aspirin is commenced after a diagnosis of cancer has been made, the greater the

benefit from aspirin.

"We believe that—given its relative safety and its favorable effects—the use of aspirin as an additional [treatment of cancer](#) is fully justified.

"As [aspirin](#) is inexpensive and readily available in almost every country. Its promotion could have benefits worldwide, and with the present delays in specialist services for patients suspected to have cancer, this reduction could be of enormous possible benefit," added Professor Elwood.

More information: Peter Elwood et al, Aspirin and cancer treatment: systematic reviews and meta-analyses of evidence: for and against, *British Journal of Cancer* (2023). [DOI: 10.1038/s41416-023-02506-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41416-023-02506-5)

Provided by Cardiff University

Citation: Aspirin may benefit cancer treatments (2023, December 4) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-12-aspirin-benefit-cancer-treatments.html>

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